DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 461 688 UD 032 379

TITLE	California's Proposition 227: Implications and Costs of the Unz Initiative.
INSTITUTION	Council of the Great City Schools, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1998-05-00
NOTE	8p.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.cgcs.org/services/legislative/unz.htm
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Bilingual Education; Bilingual Students; Bilingualism; Costs; Disadvantaged Youth; Educational Finance; Elementary Secondary Education; *English (Second Language); *Immersion Programs; *Language of Instruction; Political Influences; Public Schools; Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; *State Programs
IDENTIFIERS	California; *Proposition 227 (California 1998)

ABSTRACT

Voters in California will vote June 2, 1998 to decide the fate of Proposition 227, a measure proposed by businessman Ron Unz that would substantially change the way that students who are not proficient in English are taught. If approved by the voters, Proposition 227, the Unz Initiative, would essentially eliminate bilingual education programs in the state's public elementary and secondary schools, replacing them with special 1-year immersion classes taught in English only. This report explores how the Unz Initiative will affect the quality of public education in California, and how much it may cost the taxpayers. Approximately 1.4 million children in the state are classified as English language learners, and about half of these students currently receive academic instruction in their primary or home language as they are learning English. If the Unz Initiative is approved, numbers of students would require new class and school assignments, and sizable numbers of teachers would be reassigned, and might require recertification in subject areas other than bilingual education. New curricula would be developed, new professional development programs would be required, and ways to notify parents would have to be developed. Finally, new ways for assessing student performance in each academic area would have to be developed. These short-term effects would be followed by long-term costs. The academic harm done many students may not be felt immediately, but many students would undoubtedly fall further behind their English-speaking peers. Many may require costly compensatory education. and some may need to be in programs like Title I that are even costlier to run and harder to get out of than the current bilingual programs. Costs of retaining students in grade and providing needed summer programs would be added to costs for professional development so that regular education teachers could meet the challenges of students with inadequate English skills. The Unz Initiative would bring with it a high probability that many English language learners would end up in remedial, special education, or alternative classes. (SLD)

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ED 461 688

CALIFORNIA'S PROPOSITION 227:

Implications and Costs of the Unz Initiative

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May 1998

I. BACKGROUND

A. Introduction

Voters in California will go to the polls on June 2 to decide the fate of Proposition 227, a measure proposed by businessman Ron Unz that would substantially change the way that students who are not proficient in English are taught. If approved by the voters, Proposition 227--or the Unz Initiative—would essentially eliminate bilingual education programs in the state's public elementary and secondary schools, replacing them with special one-year immersion classes taught in English only.

The Initiative requires California's 1.4 million English language learners to attend special classes in English until they have acquired a good working knowledge of the language, except that these courses could not last longer than one year—despite research that shows that more time is needed. Several exceptions within the Unz Initiative apply. If parents or guardians ask a school to enroll their child in classes taught in a language other than English, then the school may do so as long as certain

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other conditions are met. Schools may also provide bilingual education (which includes instruction in the students' native language) when 20 or more English language learners in a grade choose to be taught in a language other than English. If the school is unable to provide bilingual instruction to those who want it, students would be allowed to transfer to another setting that could provide that instruction.

Schools would have 60 days to develop and begin implementing the special English instruction classes for English language learners, if Proposition 227 passes.

B. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform voters and the public, in California and nationwide, about how the Unz Initiative will affect the quality of public education in the state and how much it may cost the taxpayers. The report lays out the effects of the Unz Initiative in three ways. First, it examines problems and costs of implementing special English instructional programs in the Initiative's first year. Second, it looks at longer-term effects of the Initiative, including the costs of teacher recruitment and professional development, student mainstreaming, curricular development, materials and remedial instruction. Finally, the report discusses other implications for and effects on quality teaching in California.

This report uses a variety of methods for estimating costs, each described in the text or in footnotes. The effect of the Unz Initiative on each school district will vary considerably depending on the composition of the student body and the qualifications of instructional teachers and staff. Most cost estimates in this report are based on statewide averages.

II. Initial effects of Implementing Unz

Approximately 1.4 million children in the state of California are classified as English language learners (ELL), students who are in the process of learning English. About half of those students currently receive academic instruction in their primary or home language as they are learning English, and another 31.4% receive their primary instruction in English. Table 1 shows the types of instruction currently provided to English language learners in California.

TABLE 1. Types of Instruction Provided to English Language Learners in California

Instructional Program by Primary Language	Number of ELLs	% of Total ELLs
Primary Language Support and Instruction	708,522	51.3%
English Language Instruction	433,485	31.4%
No Special Services	220,393	16.0%
Withdrew from Services	18,993	1.4%
Total	1,381,393	100.0%

The Unz Initiative would immediately affect students currently receiving academic instruction or support in their native language or those receiving no services. The 31% of students receiving instruction primarily in English would be less affected in the first year of Unz's implementation. Should the voters approve, then the Initiative would likely have a considerable impact in the first year, including the following effects:

- **Student Placements and Reassignments:** Substantial numbers of California students would require new class and school assignments based on the availability of programs and on parent

preferences. (Unz permits parents to choose schools based on program preferences.) School districts across California would have to reassign the 709,000 students currently in bilingual education classes to new classes that would provide specialized English-only instruction. Another 220,000 students who are receiving no particular instruction to meet their language acquisition needs would also need to be reassigned. It is unclear how many students would have to change schools, but the impact will clearly be greatest in districts with large proportions of English language learners.

- **Teacher Reassignments:** One would also expect a sizable number of teachers and other instructional staff to be reassigned to match the realignment of students from class to class and from school to school. Approximately 85,000 teachers in California are currently providing instructional services to ELL children through a variety of methods. About 14,965 of these teachers and an additional 30,840 teacher aides are providing instruction in students' native languages. Reassigning these individuals could be very difficult because most school systems have already made preliminary personnel assignments for the 1998-99 school year. Locally determined contractual arrangements and union agreements often specify deadlines for teacher and staff reassignments. The extent of disruption would depend on the number of staff being moved.
- **Teacher Credentialing:** Teachers in California who are credentialed in bilingual education would also have to be re-certified in another subject area, obtain an emergency credential or be released from their assignments. Emergency credentialing appears to be the most likely scenario given the extensive shortage of teachers in California. This possibility could seriously increase the numbers of teachers teaching "out-of-field"—and California already has a higher than average rate of "out-of-field" teaching. The Initiative might also have longer-term effects on course offerings in colleges of teacher education and on state certification requirements. State certification will have to change in order to include courses on language development for regular classroom teachers.
- **Instructional Materials:** School districts across the state would need to purchase new instructional materials for 929,000 students who would be reassigned from current bilingual education programs or who receive no services now. At approximately $50 per student, the total costs for these new procurements would come to about $46.5 million in school year 1998-99. The costs for individual school districts would vary according to the numbers of students affected and the amount of material needed.
- **Curriculum Development:** The state and local school districts would also need to develop new curricula for classroom use. Some curricula from current English-only instructional programs could be helpful, but materials would need to be updated with current thought on the best ways to teach children whose native language is not English, to redesign assessments, and to help English language learners meet the state's academic standards.
- **Professional Development:** Teachers all across the state would need substantial professional development of two general types. The first type is professional development for teachers who would staff the one-year specialized language acquisition programs. The second is professional development for regular classroom teachers who would be working with growing numbers of children who speak very little or no English. At approximately $100 per student, the needed professional development could reach almost $100 million for a single year.
- **Parental Involvement and Notification:** If passed, the Unz Initiative would also require extensive efforts to inform parents about program modifications and options. School districts would have to notify the families of all 929,000 students potentially affected. Notifications would have to be done in the native languages of the families since parents are often less likely than the students to be able to speak English. Translation services, printing and mailing costs

will have to be absorbed by state and local school systems.

- **Student Assessments:** Finally, the state and school districts would have to determine methods for assessing student performance in each academic area. This would be a particularly complex issue because the Unz Initiative would be at direct odds with a recent ruling in Superior Court of California in the case of *California Department of Education vs. San Francisco Unified School District Governing Board.* This ruling prohibited the state from requiring that all students be tested in English on statewide assessments.

These and other effects will be felt in school districts across California should state voters approve the Unz Initiative. The effects will be greatest in school districts with large numbers of students receiving traditional bilingual education services. Total costs across the state could run to at least $150 million in the first year, not including personnel time or costs associated with curriculum development, public information, or assessment redesign. But the larger impact of the Initiative may be in the second and subsequent years of implementation.

III. Long-term effects of Implementing Unz

The Unz Initiative requires that students be mainstreamed into regular classes after a one-year transition in special English instruction programs. The costs of mainstreaming students who were once in bilingual classes or who do not speak English would include all the first-year costs described in the previous section plus the costs associated with the program in subsequent years. The costs for the second and subsequent years fall into two broad categories: the costs of correcting the academic harm, and the costs on teachers unable to handle more diverse classes.

C. Costs of Academic Harm

The most serious effect of Unz may not be felt immediately, but may appear two or more years later. This involves the educational and social costs to the children and the price to the state for addressing them. The research on bilingual education is clear that one year of instruction in English—even intense instruction—is not sufficient to give students the language skills they need to reach proficiency in such content areas as math, literature, science, history, social studies, and geography. Common sense also says that a single year of language training is not enough to make one more than conversationally proficient in another language, even for children, who acquire foreign language skills faster than adults.

The likely result is that students who were formerly being taught in bilingual programs of whatever quality will fall farther behind their English-speaking peers in academic achievement. Many students coming to the country are already behind in various developmental and academic respects. The research is clear about the size of those achievement gaps--

- The academic performance of English language learners generally lags behind other elementary school students as measured by grades, retention in grade, teacher judgments of students' ability and standardized tests.
- About 1 out of 4 English language learners (25%) in schools with high concentrations of ELLs has repeated a grade by 3rd grade—compared with 15% of other students.
- Most English language learners come from poverty backgrounds: 54% of 1st and 3rd grade ELLs come from families with incomes under $15,000.
- More than 40% of English language learners, compared with 13% of all students, attend high-poverty schools where at least 75% of the students are eligible for free or reduced school

lunch.

While bilingual education is provided to many ELLs in California, it is not offered to all. In 1997-98, about $385 million of California's $30 billion budget for K-12 education was earmarked for Economic Impact Aid (serving ELL and disadvantaged students), compared with the $502 million the state spends on school transportation services; the $1.5 billion devoted to class size reduction; and the $2 billion apportioned for special education. The lack of funding for bilingual education rather than the program itself creates an achievement gap between English language learners and their native English-speaking peers.

English language learners in the later grades show even greater disparities according to another report by the U.S. Department of Education:

- Nineteen percent (19%) of English language learners in the average middle school were assigned to grade levels which were at least two years lower than age/grade norms, compared to 9% of all students; and
- Twenty-seven percent (27%) of English language learners in the average high school were assigned to grade levels that were at least two years lower than age/grade norms, compared with 11% of all students.

Many students new to the country live in poverty and also attend schools where poverty is heavily concentrated. Decades of educational research indicate that academic achievement and poverty are highly and negatively correlated; in other words, the greater the concentrations of poverty, the lower the achievement and college matriculation rates. The reason for the connection is that poor students do not have access to the toys, books, experiences, health care, nutrition, computers, software and other items that enrich their learning and cognitive development. In addition, schools with high numbers and percentages of poor children or children of color typically receive fewer dollars per child to close the resource gaps than schools in wealthier areas.

As more and more students from the one-year special English language classes are mainstreamed into regular classes, the state will likely see more of these students referred to higher-priced compensatory education services or even costlier special education programs. In addition, a drop in the number of students classified statewide as ELL could affect the distribution of state and federal dollars for compensatory education funding, because ELL counts are a factor in allocation formulas.

Tracking English language learners into compensatory education, special education or alternative education could happen for various reasons. One, teachers who do not have the skills and knowledge necessary to handle classes with such diverse language and academic needs may be tempted to refer students to other services or programs. Two, teachers may have difficulty teaching students who act out their frustrations when they do not understand lessons in English. Teachers may find it easier to refer those students to alternative schools or less rigorous academic programs.

Rather than receiving extra English language support in their regular classes, ELLs may be tracked into programs like Title I or IDEA that are costlier to run and harder to get out of and back into the regular track. The cost to the state and the districts multiplies annually by the numbers of students who fall behind in their academic courses because they have not yet mastered English.

The financial costs of correcting this downward academic trajectory might take a number of forms:

- **Retaining Students In-Grade:** If students do not do well academically, more and more schools systems across the country now hold them back for an additional year in the same grade. To retain 336,000 English language learners in the same grade at an average per pupil expenditure of $5,114 (1995-96 revenue per ADA) would cost the state some $1.1 billion annually.
- **Providing Summer Schools:** Retaining students in-grade is costly, and may not result in long-term improvements in student performance. Therefore, as an alternative, more school systems nationally are requiring summer school attendance for students who do not master course content during the regular school year. Providing a six-week summer school program for the same number of ELLs as above (336,000 students) would cost the state approximately $215 million annually.

The monetary costs of rectifying the academic problems created by Unz could amount to at least $1.3 billion annually. But this does not include the emotional costs to children who do not do as well in schools as their peers are doing or as their parents expect. And it does not include the social costs to the state and localities for a perpetually high dropout rate, or the high costs of crime, welfare and housing for individuals whose achievement has been dampened.

D. Costs of Professional Development

Preventing some of the problems described in the previous section would require extensive retraining of teachers throughout the state. Regular classroom teachers would face increasing challenges as more and more ELLs, often from two or more language groups, are mainstreamed into their classes. Many of these students may not have the English skills to deal with the subject matter. Incorporating small numbers of ELLs per class will impact more teachers statewide and require even more professional development, assuming class sizes remain the same:

- If English language learners were mainstreamed at a ratio of 20 ELLs per class/per teacher, a total of 56,126 elementary grade level classes (or 36.3%) would be affected. Professional development for 36.3% of elementary school teachers would be needed.
- If English language learners were mainstreamed at a ratio of 15 ELLs per class/per teacher, a total of 74,835 elementary grade level classes (or 48.4%) would be affected. Professional development for close to half of all elementary school teachers would be needed.
- If English language learners were mainstreamed at a ratio of 10 ELLs per class/per teacher, a total of 112,253 elementary grade level classes (or 72.5%) would be affected. Professional development for more than 70% of all elementary school teachers would be needed.

TABLE 2. Number and Percent of California Teachers Requiring Professional Development

	@ a 1:20 ratio		@ a 1:15 ratio		@ a 1:10 ratio	
Grade Level	# of teachers	% of total teachers	# of teachers	% of total teachers	# of teachers	% of total teachers
Elementary (K-8)	56,126	36.3%	74,835	48.4%	112,253	72.5%
Secondary (9-12)	12,943	24.5%	17,258	32.7%	25,887	49.1%
Total	69,070	33.3%	92,093	44.4%	138,139	66.6%

The financial costs of providing the needed professional development and retraining would depend

on--

- Depth of material covered;
- Length of program;
- Time of delivery; for example if inservice training were provided during regular school days, the school district would incur costs for hiring substitute teachers;
- The type of professional development package and facilitator; for example, whether professional development services are being provided by outside consultants, institutions of higher education, or others; and
- The depth of commitment to educating all children.

IV. DISCUSSION

Proposition 227 will have both short-term and long-term effects on the state. Short-term costs will likely include large-scale reassignment of students across the state and some confusion locally for parents and students. In addition, the state can expect some disruption in the placement of students in programs, classes and schools. Schools in the state and the public should expect that teacher assignments would not be as smooth as in previous years.

The more dramatic effects from the Unz Initiative may come, however, in the second and subsequent years when the academic effects of the Initiative are beginning to show. Both the financial and human costs could escalate substantially as more and more students fall farther and farther behind in their mastery of subject matter material. As this happens, the state may be faced with a choice of implementing costlier remedial programs or doing nothing. The more expensive remedial programs would ultimately take scarce dollars away from the regular educational program, thereby further undermining political support for the public schools. The price of ignoring the problem of so many students falling behind is a permanently two-tiered educational system, which is not likely to attract business to the state.

There is a high possibility that many English language learners in the state will end up in remedial, special education or alternative classes where expectations are low rather than in mainstreamed classes as the proponents of the Unz Initiative envision. Without costly professional development, teachers may find themselves overwhelmed by increasing numbers of students who not only do not know the subject matter, but also do not have the English proficiency needed to learn. The result could be a tracking system substantially more invidious than the one about which the current opponents of bilingual education now complain.

In addition, Unz will ultimately make it impossible for the state to attain any semblance of ethnic parity in admissions to first-tier colleges and universities. Already low, the numbers of students who were once limited in their English proficiency—particularly Hispanic students—but who attained college admission would likely stagnate, as more and more students fall behind in their coursework.

Finally, the Unz Initiative could simply have the opposite effect of what proponents now say. Instead of improving the quality of public education across the state, Proposition 227 could actually weaken it, thereby continuing the downward slide in California's educational rankings nationwide. Unz is little more than a Trojan horse parked on California's doorstep and will do it about as much good.